



# The Essay: Content & Structure

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# Important notice:



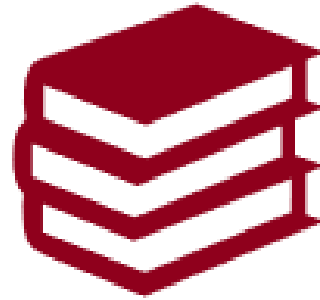
At the end of this presentation there is a link to a Microsoft Form quiz. You must score an 80% or higher to pass the quiz.

Please take your time viewing and studying this material before you proceed with the quiz.

# Objectives



Define the essay &  
discuss writing  
techniques



Emphasize the  
importance of  
research & content



Illustrate the essay's  
structure with a  
basic outline

# Essay

[Noun] /'es·eɪ/



- ❖ a short **literary composition** on a particular **theme** or **subject**, usually in **prose** and generally **analytic**, **speculative**, or **interpretative**.
- ❖ an **effort** to perform or accomplish something; attempt.
- ❖ Example sentence:
  - Your assignment is to write a 500-word essay on one of Shakespeare's sonnets.

# The Basics



**TOPIC**



**RESEARCH**



**THESIS  
STATEMENT**



**SUPPORTING  
SENTENCES**



**SOURCES**

# Choosing a Topic

- ❖ IF you have the freedom to choose, brainstorm what interests YOU (always make sure your topic has been approved by the professor):
  - ❖ What do you like?
  - ❖ What ignites your curiosity?
- ❖ If you do not have the freedom to choose and a specific topic was assigned:
  - ❖ How do you link the topic to your life or expertise?
  - ❖ How does this topic affect your life or those around you?

“Like the novel, the essay is a literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything.”

–Aldous

Huxley

# Topic, Text & Thesis Statement



- ❖ A **topic** is a general subject or issue to be written about.
- ❖ A literary **text** is a work that is written for a purpose. It typically includes a wide range of topics that the author uses to contextualize his or her message.
- ❖ A **thesis statement** is the point of view, argument or posture you take as a scholar with regards to the literary text or topic.

## Example

**Topic:** Colors & Personalities

**Text:** “Color Me Pink”

**Thesis:** Colors can help us understand ourselves and others by learning about the effects they have on people.

on

If you're lost or uninspired, these techniques can help you find and organize your ideas!



### FREE WRITING

Let your thoughts flow & remember to take note of whatever comes to mind!



### BRAINSTORM

Generate a list of ideas and possible focuses. Explore concepts related to your topic in a free & relaxed manner.



### CLUSTER

Write down different terms or phrases randomly, then link them together into a sort of web. From the chaos you can create order!



# CLOSE READING



- ❖ *SLOW DOWN!* Writing about literature involves **ACTIVE READING** and **CRITICAL THINKING**, take in the text word for word & use the dictionary when necessary!
- ❖ A close reading “develops an understanding of the text and investigates how the text makes meaning”. When reading the text assigned observe closely the content (themes), the form (structure) and the way these two express a message. For this you will need to read the text more than once!
  - ✓ SUMMARIZE: What is this text about and what does it mean?
  - ✓ ANALYZE: Can you relate to the text? Develop an opinion by questioning the text.
  - ✓ SYNTHESIZE: What do other critics have to say about it? Do you agree?
- ❖ A strategy to cover your bases is diligent **NOTETAKING**, write down key details and insights you find while reading.

# KEY QUESTIONS FOR CLOSE READING

## Who?

- Who is the author?
- Who has talked about it before?

## Where?

- Where does the story take place?
- Where is this a problem?

## When?

- When was it written?
- When did it happen?

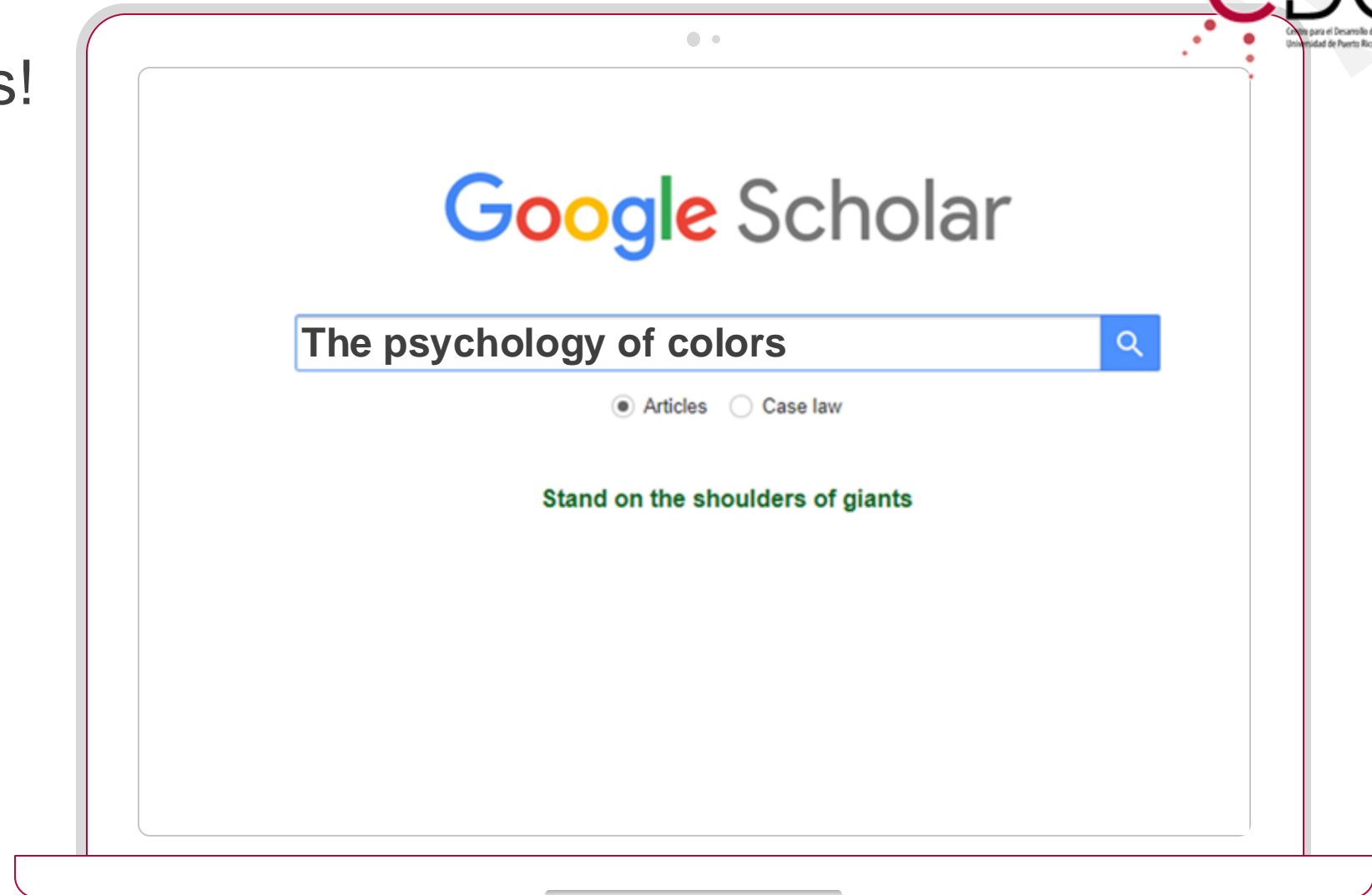
## Why?

- Why is this topic important?
- Why is the title relevant to the topic?

# Research, Research & Research

## Start your engines!

- ❖ If you don't know about the text or issue you were assigned, you will need to research from the start.
- ❖ Investigating will help you find a thesis statement about the subject and aid you in "choosing an angle".
- ❖ Use scholarly databases and finders.
- ❖ Learn about:
  - ❖ Biographical facts about the author
  - ❖ Major and minor themes within the text
  - ❖ Previous analysis of the text by other authors



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... function of the organism. Occupational Therapy, 1942, 21, 147-151. HEVNER, K. Experimental studies of the affective value of colors and lines. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1735, 17, 385-398. JACOBS, K. W., & HUS&ER ...  
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RB Hupka, Z Zaleski, J Otto, L Reidl... - ...-cultural psychology, 1997 - journals.sagepub.com  
Word associations or verbal synesthesia between concepts of color and emotions were studied in Gersnary, Mexico, Poland, Russia, and the United States. With emotion words as the between-subjects variable, 661 undergraduates indicated on 6-point scales to what ...  
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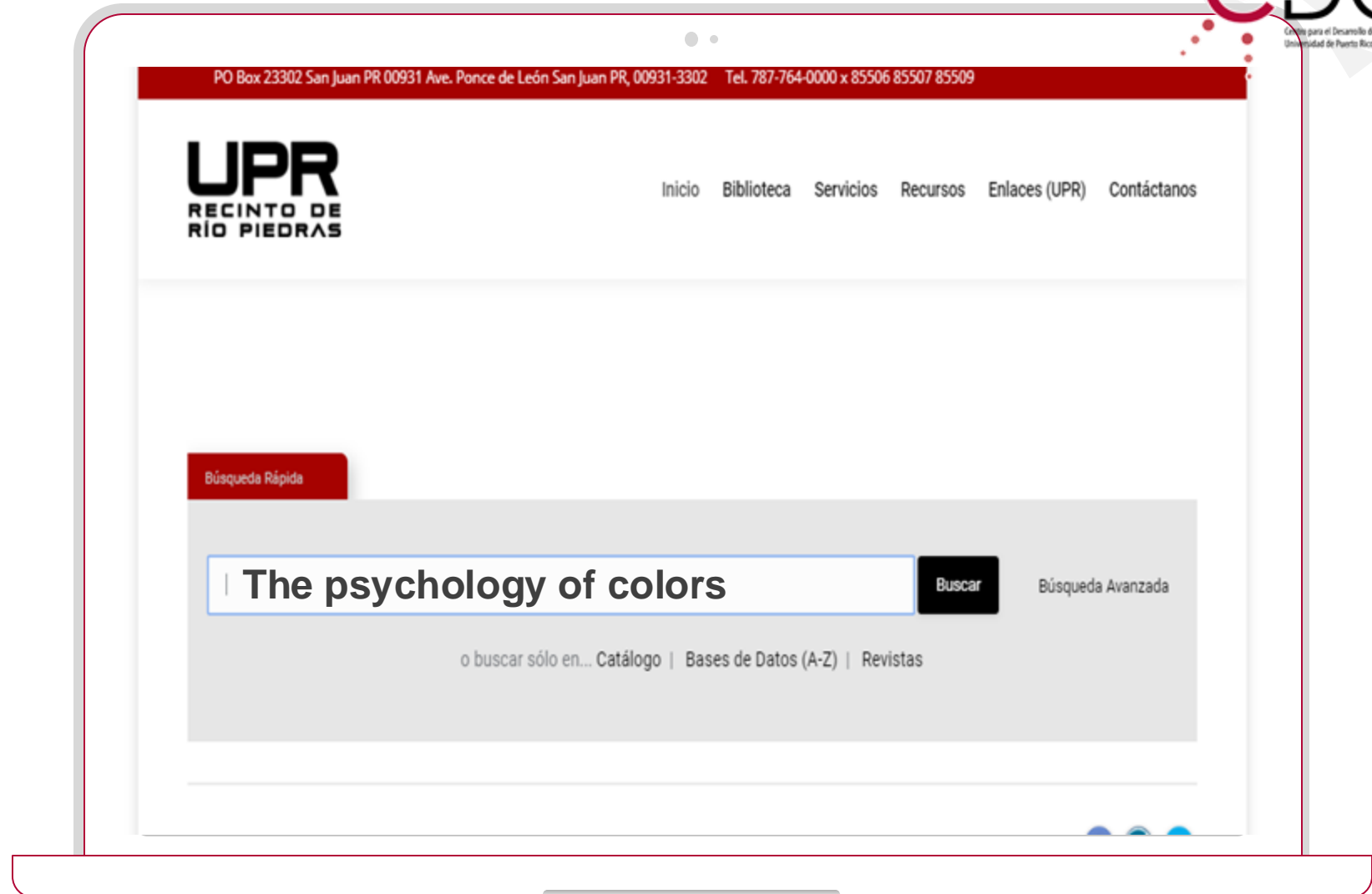
**Psychology of Colors**  
D Johnson - Infoplease. Available online: http://www.infoplease ..., 2005 - vickilynwilson.net  
Black is the color of authority and power. It is popular in fashion because it makes people

# Research, Research & Research



To back up your point, you always need secondary sources:

- ❖ Find sources that support your perspective.
- ❖ When you find sources that contradict it, make sure you choose those that strengthen your argument.
- ❖ The more information you have, the easier it will be to understand the topic and to talk about it.

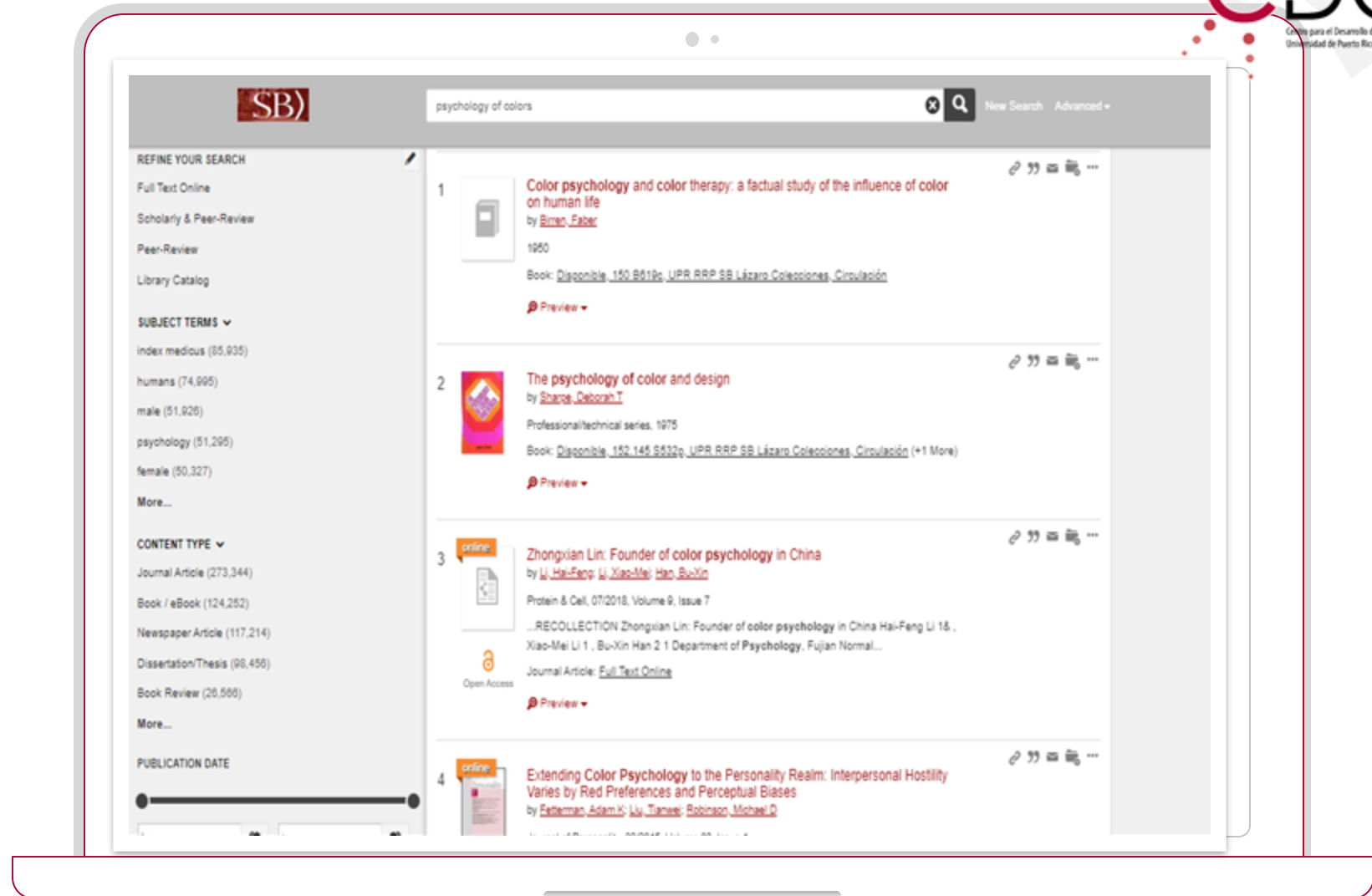


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# Thesis Statement

- A thesis statement is expressed in **one sentence** that summarizes **the main point** or **claim** discussed in the essay. It contains a **topic sentence** and a **controlling idea** (your point of view on the subject).
- There are two types of thesis statements: **direct** & **indirect**.
- The **direct thesis statement** declares an explicit main idea, clearly defined in the introductory paragraph.
  - Ex. I love orange because it reminds me of the autumn leaves, poppies and Halloween, my favorite holiday.
- The **indirect thesis statement** isn't as explicit as the direct, and it requires further development throughout the essay's body.
  - Ex. I love orange for three reasons.

# The Basic Outline



## Introduction

(Background info & Thesis Statement)

- This is the first paragraph of your essay. It functions as a guide for your reader by introducing the topic and main thesis that will be developed throughout the text.
- Present your topic by providing background information related to it.

## Body

(Topic Sentence & Supporting Details)

- The body or developmental paragraphs is where most of your content will be located. This is your chance to explain and justify the point you are trying to make. Expand on your thesis statement by providing additional details and supporting arguments.

## Conclusion

(Brief Summary & Restatement)

- The conclusion is meant to restate your main thesis, it should summarize your main points.



# Designing your outline & first draft

You can use tools like this one to organize your content and main ideas.

Remember: Each paragraph should have a point of development, a topic sentence and supporting details.

## Essay Outline

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

### Introduction:

Hook: \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

### Development:

#### **First developmental paragraph:**

Point of development #1 \_\_\_\_\_

Topic Sentence \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting details (3+)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Second developmental paragraph:**

Point of development #2 \_\_\_\_\_

Topic sentence \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting details (3+)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Third developmental paragraph:**

Point of development #3 \_\_\_\_\_

Topic sentence \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting details (3+)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Conclusion:

Restate three points in different words \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Final comment/point \_\_\_\_\_



# Introduction:



## EXPOSE YOUR TOPIC

- Include a “Hook” statement to appeal your reader and invite them to keep reading (optional).
- Include basic information (title, author, place, time, etc.)
- Establish the topic and main points you’re going to discuss.
- Present your thesis statement:
  - What are you going to prove in this essay?

## Body:

### DEVELOP YOUR THESIS

- Write supporting sentences that prove your point by including:
  - Statistics
  - Direct quotes by other researchers
  - Reference to the source material
  - Paraphrases or indirect quotations
- Analyze and establish the connection between your content and thesis statement to prove your main arguments.

# Conclusion:

## RESTATE YOUR ARGUMENT

- Summarize
  - Restate the points of development without being repetitive.
- When permitted, include your point of view about the main idea and the direct correlation it has with the literary works you've read and researched in a final comment.

# Essay Do's and Dont's



- **DON'T** LEAVE FLOATING QUOTATIONS: It's important to support your direct quotes by summarizing and indicating their function in your text. In other words, avoid dropping quotes in the essay without explaining and justifying their presence. Write one to three sentences before and after the quote to connect it to your thesis.
- **DON'T** PLAGIARIZE: Make sure you are using a manual of style and every source you use is being referenced. Don't repeat what your sources say without giving them the credit they are due.
- **DO** REVIEW: Before handing in your essay it's important to spell check verb tenses or typos you didn't notice and reread in a thorough manner. If you have a peer, friend or family member, ask if they can read the essay and provide feedback.
- **DO** USE THE DICTIONARY: This is an essential tool for any writer. It helps us learn unknown terms but also it helps us vary our vocabulary in order to avoid sounding redundant or repetitive.

# Puerto Rico and its Colors (Example Essay Outline)



- **Introduction**
  - **Topic:** Pastel-colored homes in P.R. and their meaning
  - **Thesis Statement:** The brightly pastel-colored houses of Old San Juan are iconic elements of the Puerto Rican spirit, culture and lifestyle.
- **Development**
  - **Point of development #1:** The Puerto Rican spirit
  - **Topic sentence:** Throughout the island Puerto Ricans use color to express their emotions and desires, as well as to enlighten their spirits with celebrations and festivals.
  - **Supporting details:**
    - In addition, one of the most popular and colorful Puerto Rican arts are the “vejigante masks” used in festivals celebrated in Loíza to represent malignant spirits in the island’s folklore.
    - Traditionally, these costumes would be made in black, white and yellow, but today they are made in all sorts of brightly colored textures.
    - The rich chromatic fabrics used in their confection resemble the colorful streets of Old San Juan and they both reflect the spirit of a lively and joyful people.

- **Development (Cont.)**

- **Point of development #2:** The Puerto Rican culture

- **Topic sentence:** The explosion of colors in the capital city also symbolizes the importance of the preservation of Puerto Rican culture.

- **Supporting details:**

- During the 1940s the colonial houses of Old San Juan were nearly destroyed.
- Luckily, the Puerto Rican anthropologist Ricardo Alegría called for their preservation and argued the buildings were a cultural expression of the island's history.
- Thanks to his initiative, today the rehabilitated historic buildings shine like gems on the coastal capital.

- **Point of development #3:** The Puerto Rican lifestyle

- **Topic sentence:** The Puerto Rican lifestyle is as complex as the whole spectrum of colors we can find around the island.

- **Supporting details:**

- Being a colony since its foundation, Puerto Rico's people have endured many difficulties.
- Even so, the hardships they've had to face hasn't diminished their patriotic pride and sense of nationality.
- This complexity is evidenced through their daily lives and in the richness of their food, art and music.



- **Conclusion**

- **Restatement of three points:** In conclusion, the vividness of color in Puerto Rico's arts and architecture is an expression of the richness of its people spiritually and culturally. The pastel-colored buildings found around the island are a symbol of a colorful culture that should be admired and preserved.
- **Final comment/point:** Next time you walk around the capital's streets, let the rich palette of hues remind you not only of its crystal blue beaches and vibrant flora, but also its people!



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After completing the module, click on the following link to take the quiz and send the report to your professor:

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